
THE
POLITICAL EXECUTIVE:

**POLITICIANS AND MANAGEMENT IN
EUROPEAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Edited by
Richard Batley and Adrian Campbell

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Edited by
RICHARD BATLEY
and
ADRIAN CAMPBELL

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Introduction

RICHARD BATLEY and ADRIAN CAMPBELL

Having drastically altered local government's powers and finances, the last British Government (1987–92) inaugurated a review of its internal management. This volume, based on a special issue of the journal *Local Government Studies*, takes up a leading issue in that review: the structure and role of the political executive. It does so by reference to examples from Norway, Sweden, Germany, and Italy. We would argue that the possibility of referring to Europe rather than to the English-speaking world for models of reform is not sufficiently exploited. While British local government is in several respects still highly distinct, it is increasingly having to respond to the same external environment as other European local government systems. Moreover, the countries selected for this volume all, to some degree, share with Britain a more collective style of political leadership. The economic and political changes currently underway in both eastern and western Europe are encouraging a reappraisal of all aspects of the role of sub-national government.

With liberalization in the East and economic unification in the West, local government is increasingly exposed to processes emanating in the wider political economy. The consolidation of common institutional frameworks at the supranational level is presenting local levels of government with policies, practices and funding originating in Brussels. In these respects British local government is being drawn into a common net with that of other European countries. This may imply not only common interests but also competition between regions, towns and local authorities to provide the conditions which attract new more freely moving investment, skills and citizens.

The changing European context has generated a greater interest in learning from each others' political and managerial practices. In central and eastern Europe this is a matter of urgency as new government systems are established. In western Europe there are opportunities to compare the responses of different structures and traditions of government to common issues: the redefinition of the state's role in